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## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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*The Place of Science in Modern Civilization.* By THORSTEIN VEBLEN. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919. Pp. 509. \$3.00.

This is a collection of papers published in "various periodicals, running over a period of about twenty years." No high degree of unity is, of course, to be expected in such a compendium. The arrangement of the essays, however, departing widely from the chronological order, shows a fairly successful effort to present a more or less sequential development of Mr. Veblen's economic philosophy. A publisher's note indicates that the author of the essays reprinted in this volume has had nothing to do with their appearance in book form. No editorial work appears to have been done on them—a crude blunder in mathematical reasoning, with a rather elaborate footnote thereon, is reproduced on page 212—and no index has been prepared.

The first two essays deal with the theme of the title and develop a parallelism, along the lines of economic determinism, between the evolution of the scientific interest and of the general structure of society. This discussion may be viewed as introductory to the main theme of the book, which is presented in the next four essays, on economics as an evolutionary science and the philosophical preconceptions of economics (pp. 56-179). Various aspects of this theme are elaborated in the subsequent essays, which include discussions of the economic systems of Clark and Schmoller and of socialism. The last three papers are extraneous, dealing with racial and cultural history.

"Scientific satire" may be said to form the keynote of this book, as of most of what Mr. Veblen writes. And as the cynic trod on Plato's pride with another pride, the iconoclast breaks idols with other idols. If his opponents romance under the cloak of science, Mr. Veblen satirizes in the same guise. To say that there is as much pose and prepossession in Mr. Veblen's attitude as in the work which he criticizes is to state the case mildly. The main concern of the author is to extirpate all moralizing from economics and reduce it to a "science." His scorn is heaped on "normality" in all its forms. In the sense of separating science from moralizing, it must be admitted that there is no worthier or more needful task. The two things have been mixed badly

and to the grave disadvantage of both in the past, and no one will gainsay the valuable work which Mr. Veblen has done, in spite of extremism and a malicious sense of humor, in bringing the discussion of economic principles down to the often stern and unlovely facts.

But there are serious difficulties in the way of a "scientific" treatment of economics, over which Mr. Veblen does not help us, and many of which he does not see. A keen critic, he is not a close or clear thinker; destructively valuable, we can hardly follow him as a constructive leader. Thus in case of his favorite philosophical idea, the distinction between Hegelian and Darwinian evolutionary categories, often one cannot tell just what he means or on which side he is. In the second and third essays of the volume, Darwinism is characterized as the replacement of a teleological interpretation of phenomena by a matter-of-fact view. But in the essay on Schmoller (especially pp. 262, 265) Darwinism represents insistence on real causes, while Hegelianism is identified with empiricism. Again in the third essay we are told (p. 77) that economics must be a "theory of a cumulative sequence of economic institutions, stated in terms of the process itself." This sounds much like the "self-realizing life process" which is disparaged on page 259, and the only visible alternative is the fatuous empiricism damned with ridicule on page 262. There is obscurity and confusion of issues here. The author does not seem to recognize the familiar fact that objective science knows nothing about causes in any other sense than empirical uniformity. The difference between a "fatuous empiricism" and science is that the latter is an analytic and quantitative empiricism; outside this realm we can appeal only to an unscientific immanent teleology or else to a wholly irrational "creative evolution." (It is noteworthy that even mechanistic biologists are compelled to use teleology, and that they are merely dogmatic, in the present state of science, in insisting that it is not final.) The author's treatment of human nature is also replete with obscurity and ambiguity. Man is now a constant, now a variable; now in the causal sequence, now outside of it; sometimes the reference seems to be to a free personality, sometimes to instincts, and sometimes (apparently oftenest) to *mores*.

The most serious defect of the Veblenian philosophy comes out in the contrast between pecuniary and industrial employments, of which so much is made. (See especially pp. 279-323). Again it is not clear just what is meant by the terms. The simplest and apparently the correct view is that industrial values mean those of which the author approves and pecuniary values those of which he disapproves. As to

the reasons, grounds, or standards of this approval and disapproval, he does not find it pertinent to make a statement. It may be suggested that the "industrial" values are those which have an "alimentary or nutritive" character (pp. 90, 91) or which represent satisfaction of man's "natural" wants (p. 128), while the "pecuniary" serve only to "keep up appearances" (p. 399). But in the first place even alimentation is heterogeneous and not susceptible of accurate measurement. And if by "keeping up appearances" is meant the aesthetic side of life, still greater difficulties supervene. Under this interpretation the estimate (p. 399) that half our productive effort goes into this field is far too small; nine-tenths would be nearer the truth. But we doubt if Mr. Veblen would abolish all these gratifications, which make up the difference between human and brute life. He doubtless means to disapprove only of keeping up appearances in "improper" ways, which is to say, in ways of which he disapproves. If he has an objective test for distinguishing between valid and false aesthetic values (and equating the innumerable kinds) he does the world grievous wrong in withholding it from publication.

It goes without saying that there is a great deal in this distinction between real value and trumpery, but we wish to remark that it is a canon very difficult to apply—in a democracy! Other leading ideas in the book invite criticism, but space limits forbid. The essays are all interesting and intellectually stimulating and well worth making available in this permanent, convenient form. It is a good piece of book-making and all thoughtful students of social problems, whether or not admirers of Mr. Veblen, will find it a handy compendium.

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*An Introduction to the Industrial History of England.* By ABBOTT PAYSON USHER, PH.D., assistant professor of economics, Cornell University. Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920. \$2.50.

This book is best described as a series of critical essays on topics of industrial history, mainly English, arranged in chronological order. The author devotes a preliminary chapter to an exact definition of the terms of industrial organization—factory, craft, wage system, putting-out system, sweating system, and the like. The second and third chapters discuss in the light of his definitions the industrial organization of the ancient world and its development in the French medieval craft guilds.